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Holdridge

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(54) **CEILING SYSTEM**

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Primary Examiner — Patrick Maestri

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E04B 9/06 (2006.01)

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **E04B 9/10** (2013.01); **E04B 9/06** (2013.01)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC E04B 9/10
USPC 52/506.05, 506.07
See application file for complete search history.

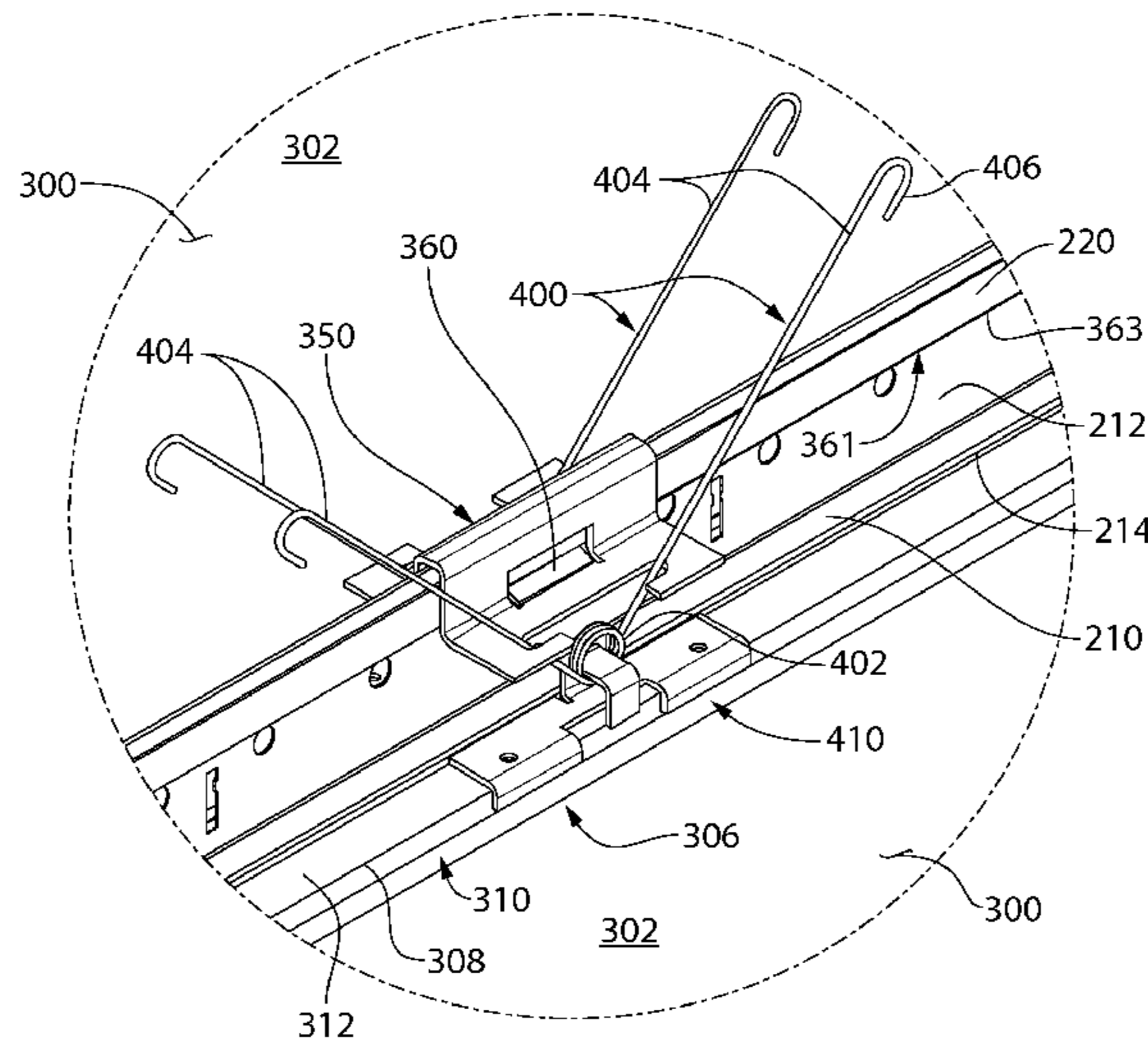
A ceiling system in one embodiment includes a grid support member, a ceiling panel, a torsion spring mounted on the ceiling panel, and a spring clip slideably mounted on the grid support member and configured to retain the spring. The spring clip includes a pair of resilient locking tabs engaging the grid support member to lock the clip to the member, thereby preventing withdrawing the clip from the support member. In one embodiment, the locking tabs form a snap-fit to the grid support member. The spring clip is positionable in a plurality of axial mounting positions on the grid support member to facilitate mounting the ceiling panel. In one embodiment, the grid support member may have a T-shaped cross section.

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17 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



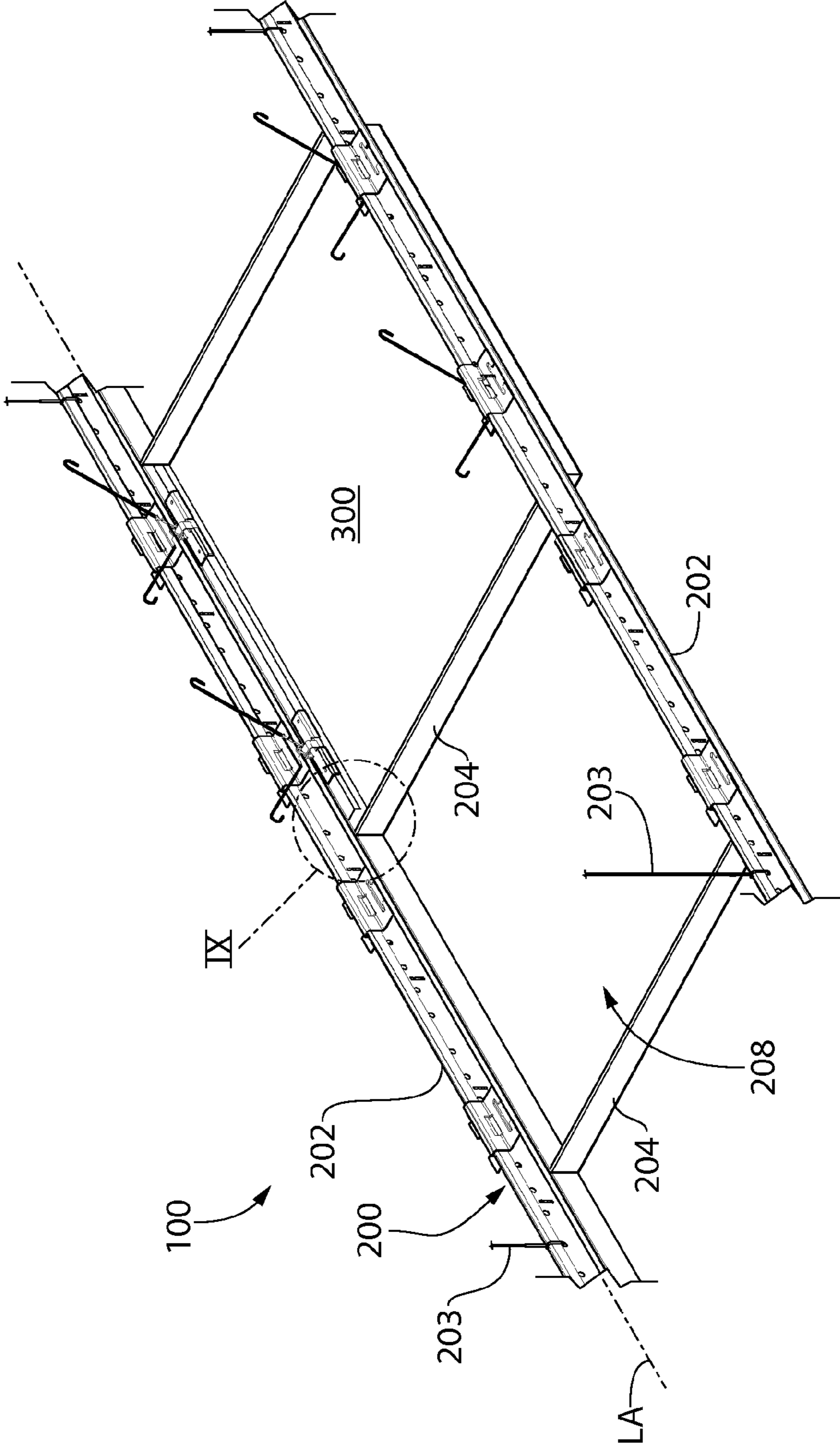


FIG. 1

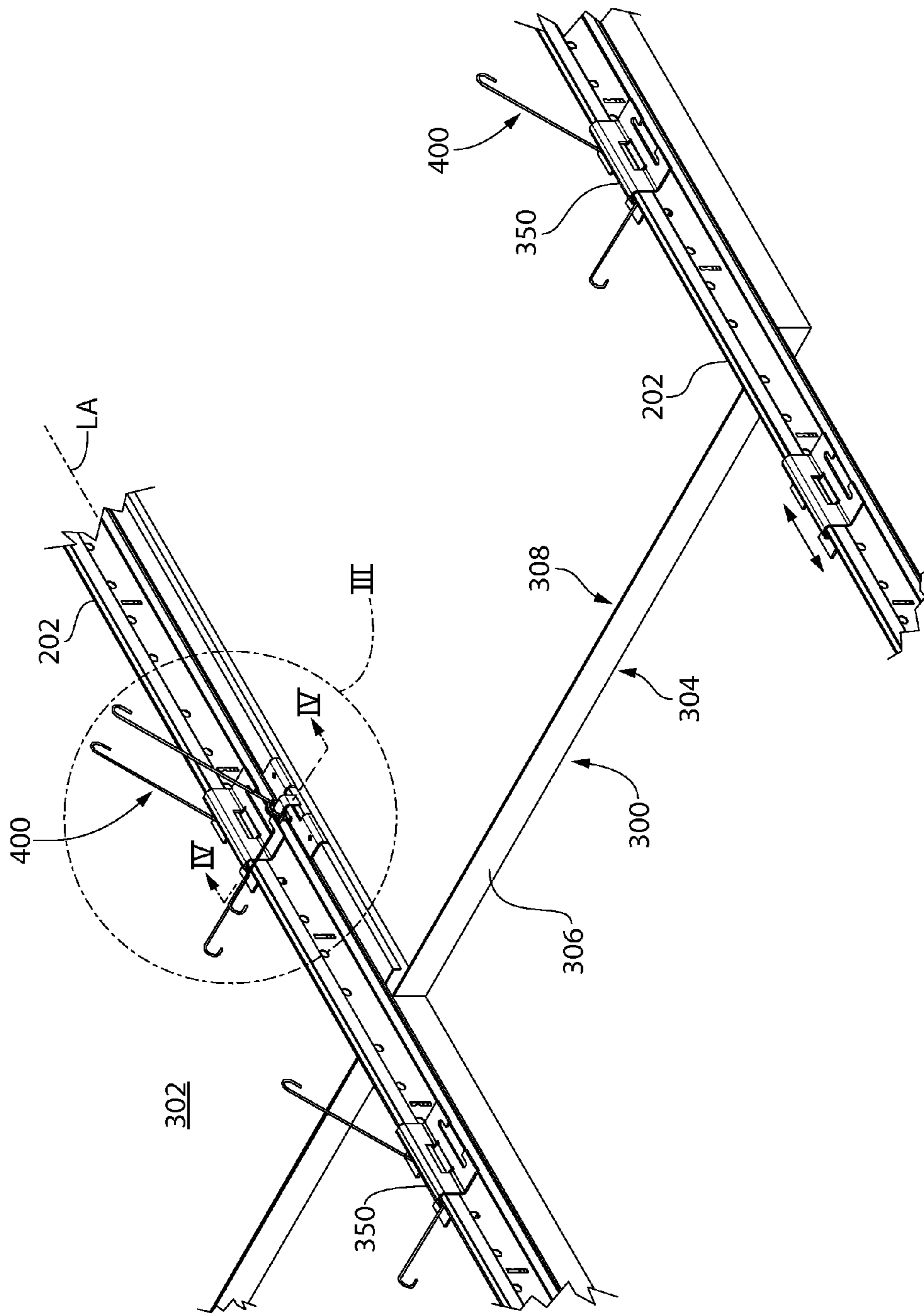


FIG. 2

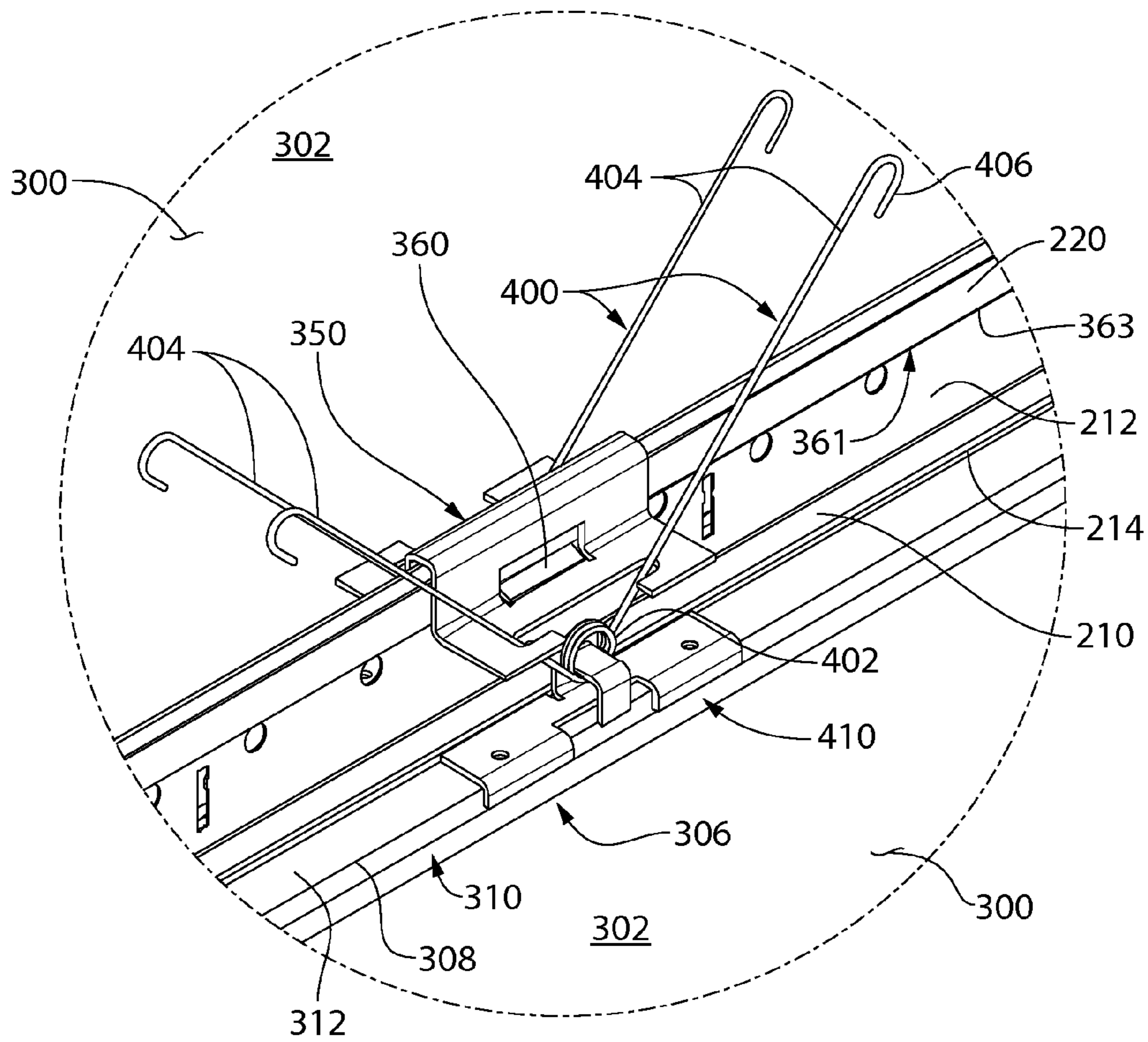


FIG. 3

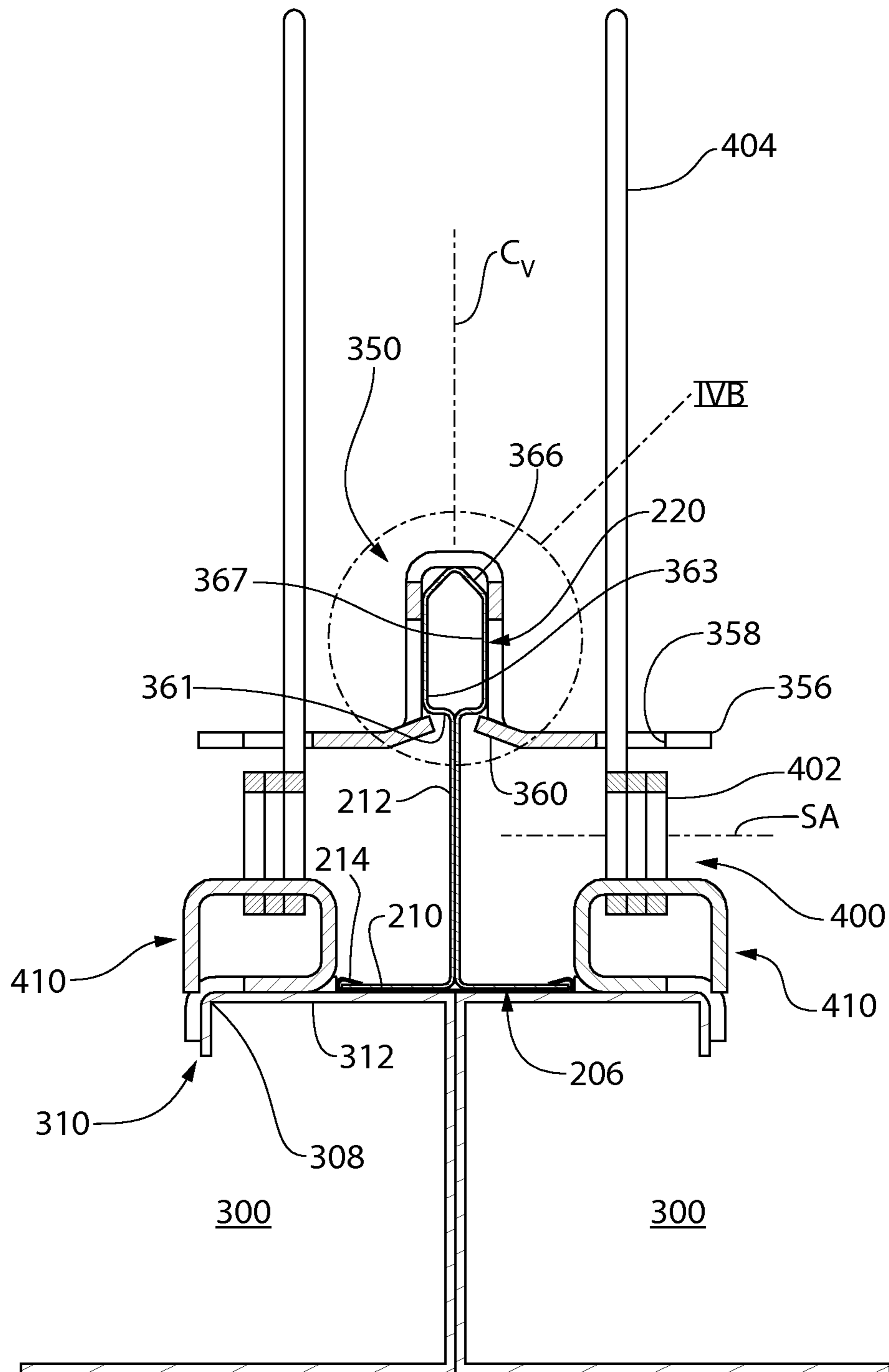


FIG. 4A

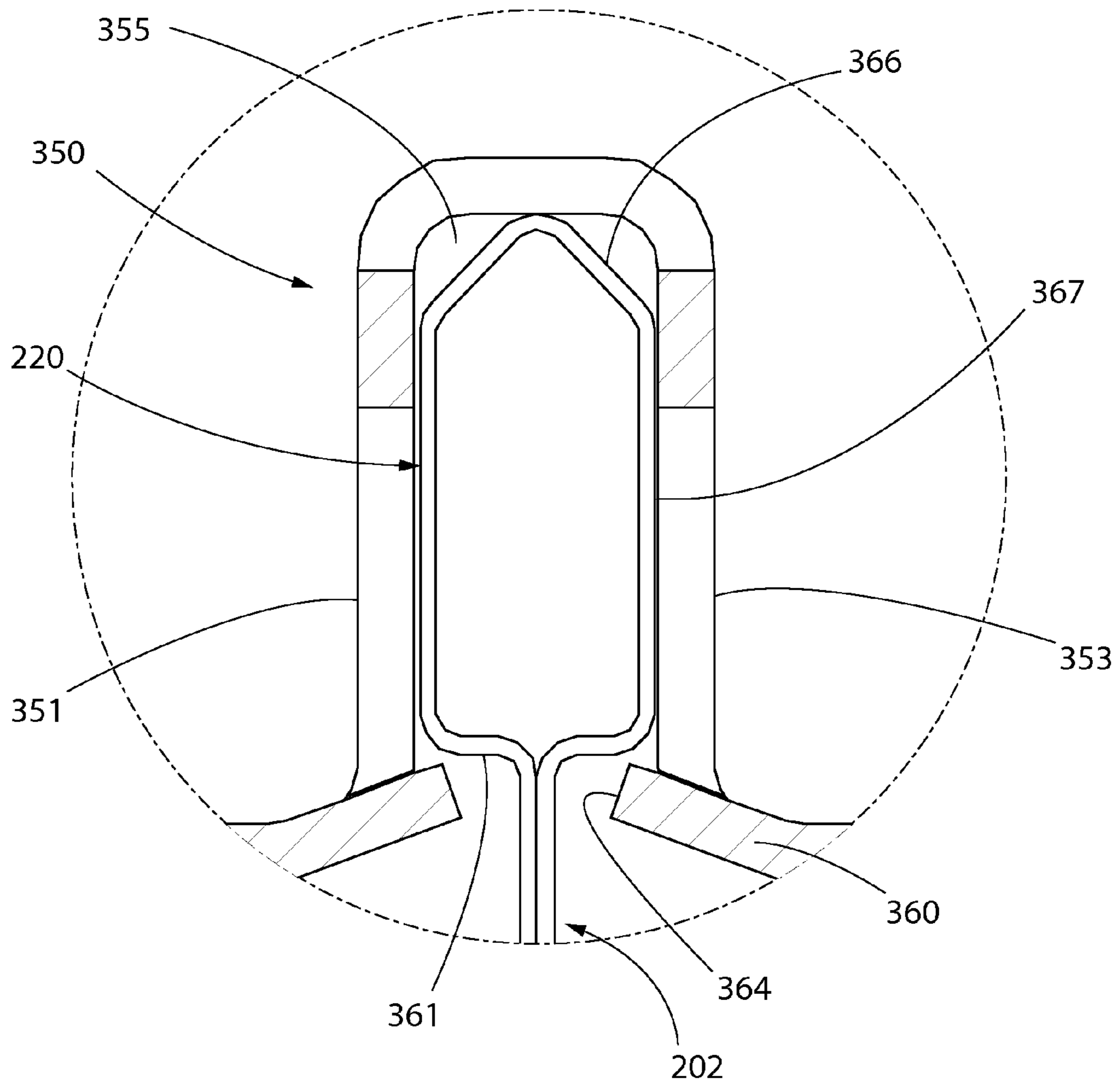


FIG. 4B

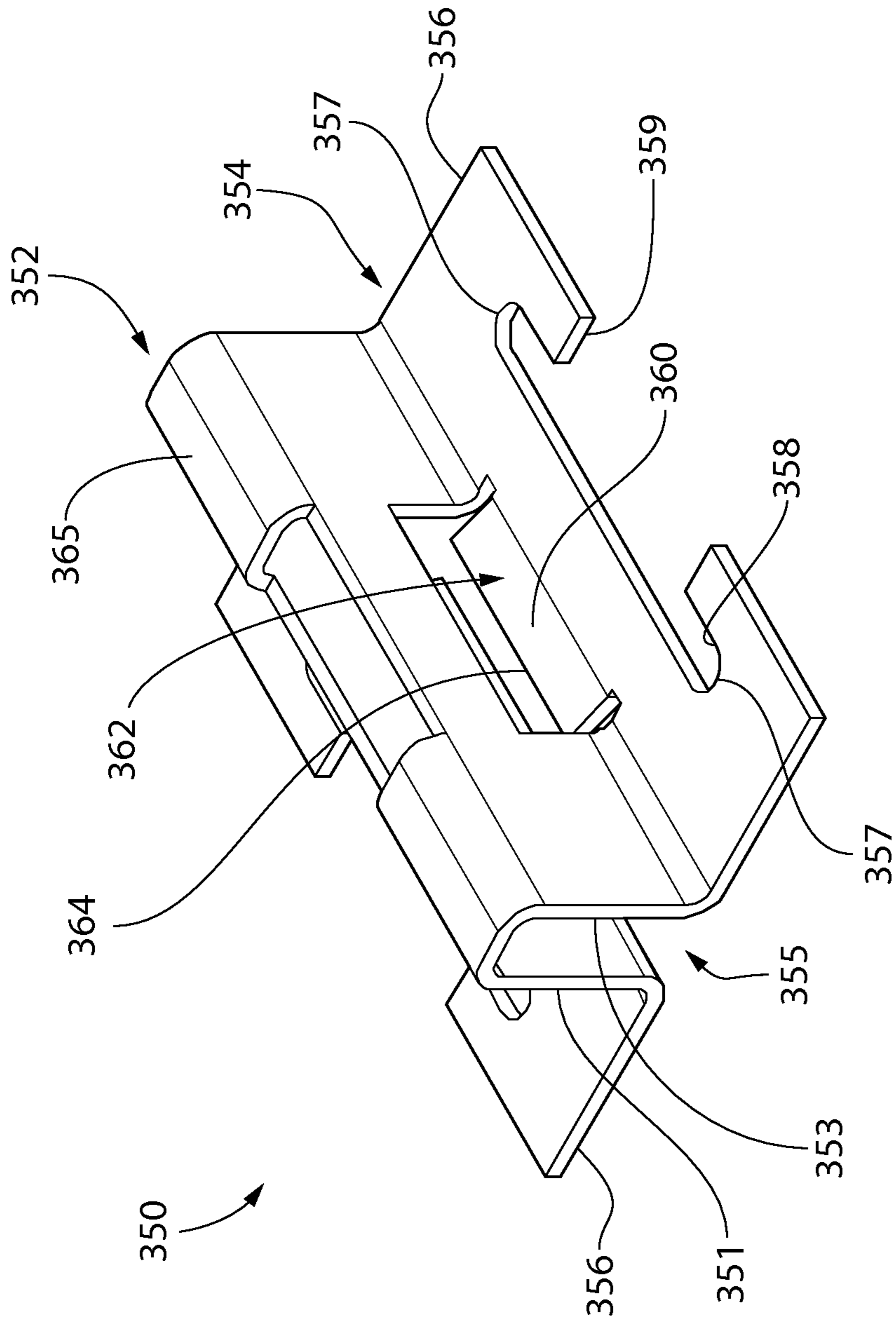


FIG. 5

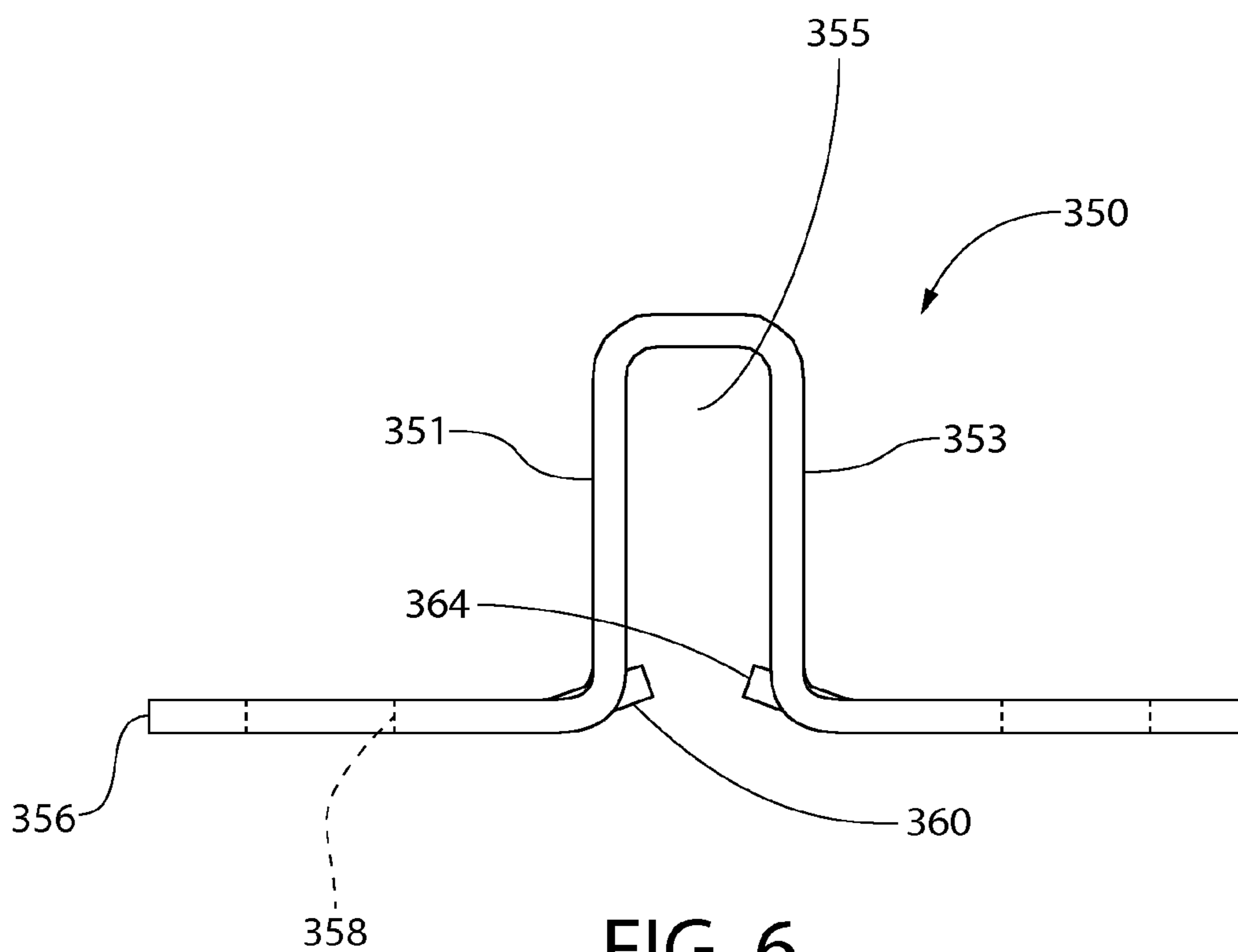


FIG. 6

FIG. 7A

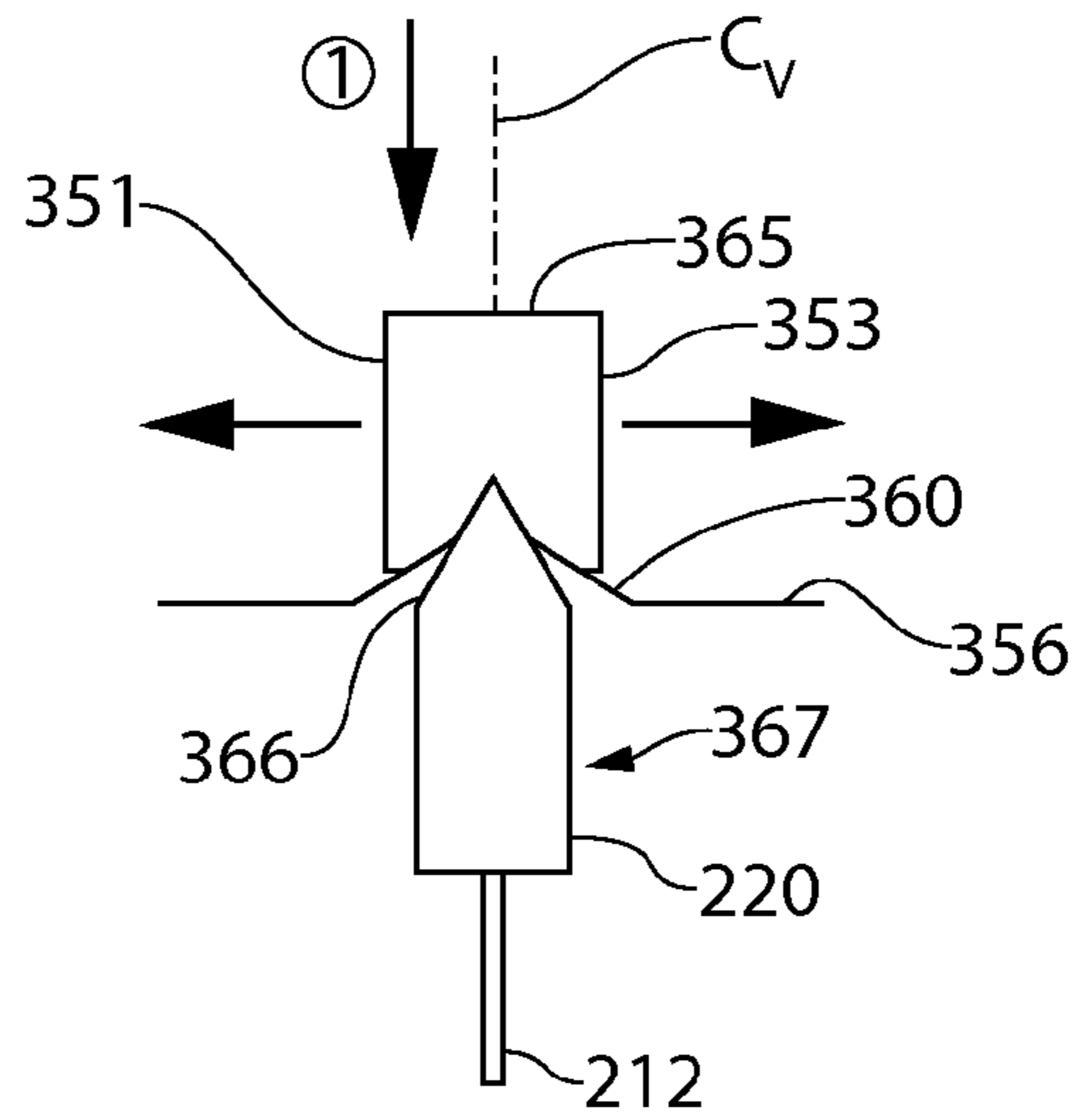


FIG. 7B

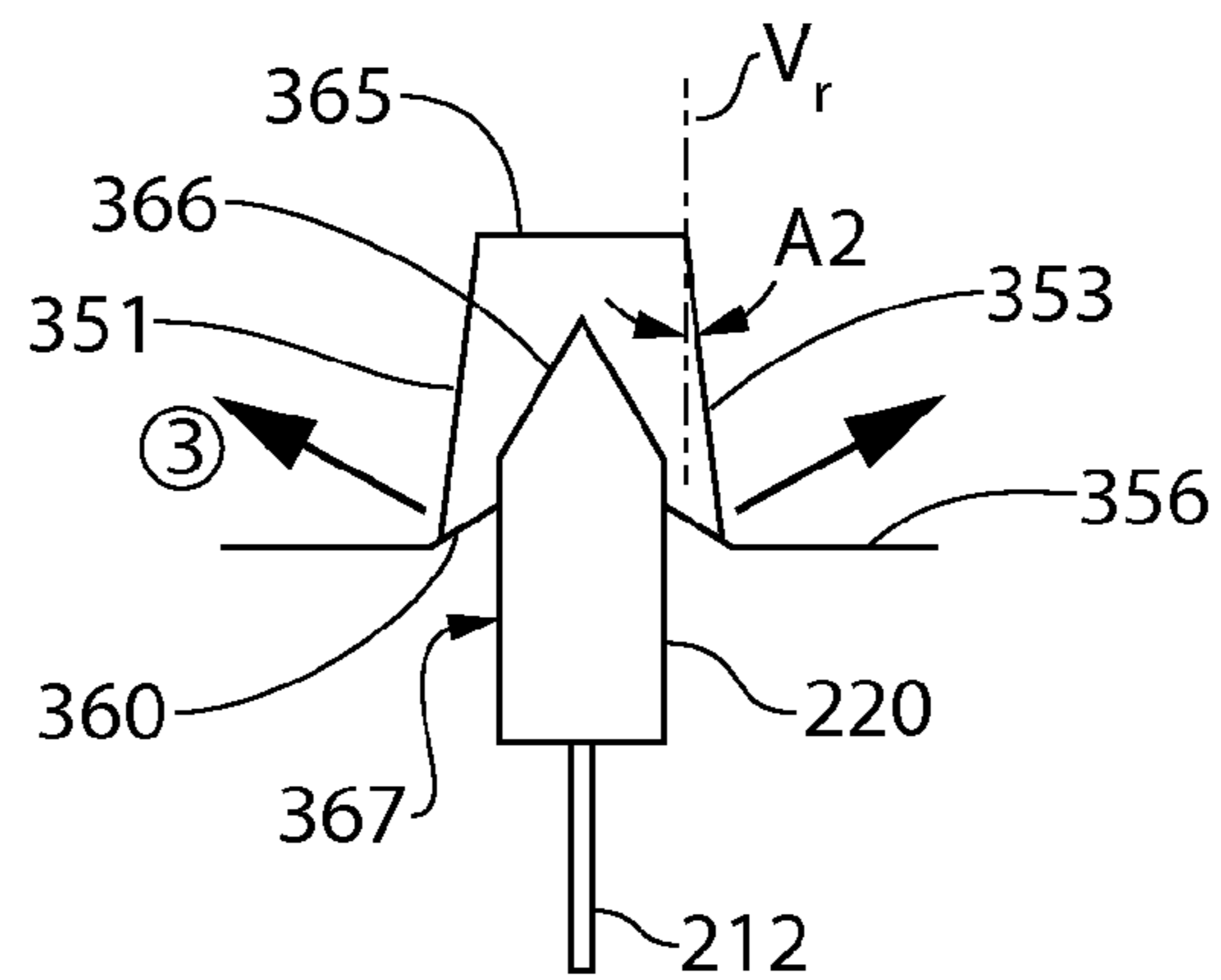
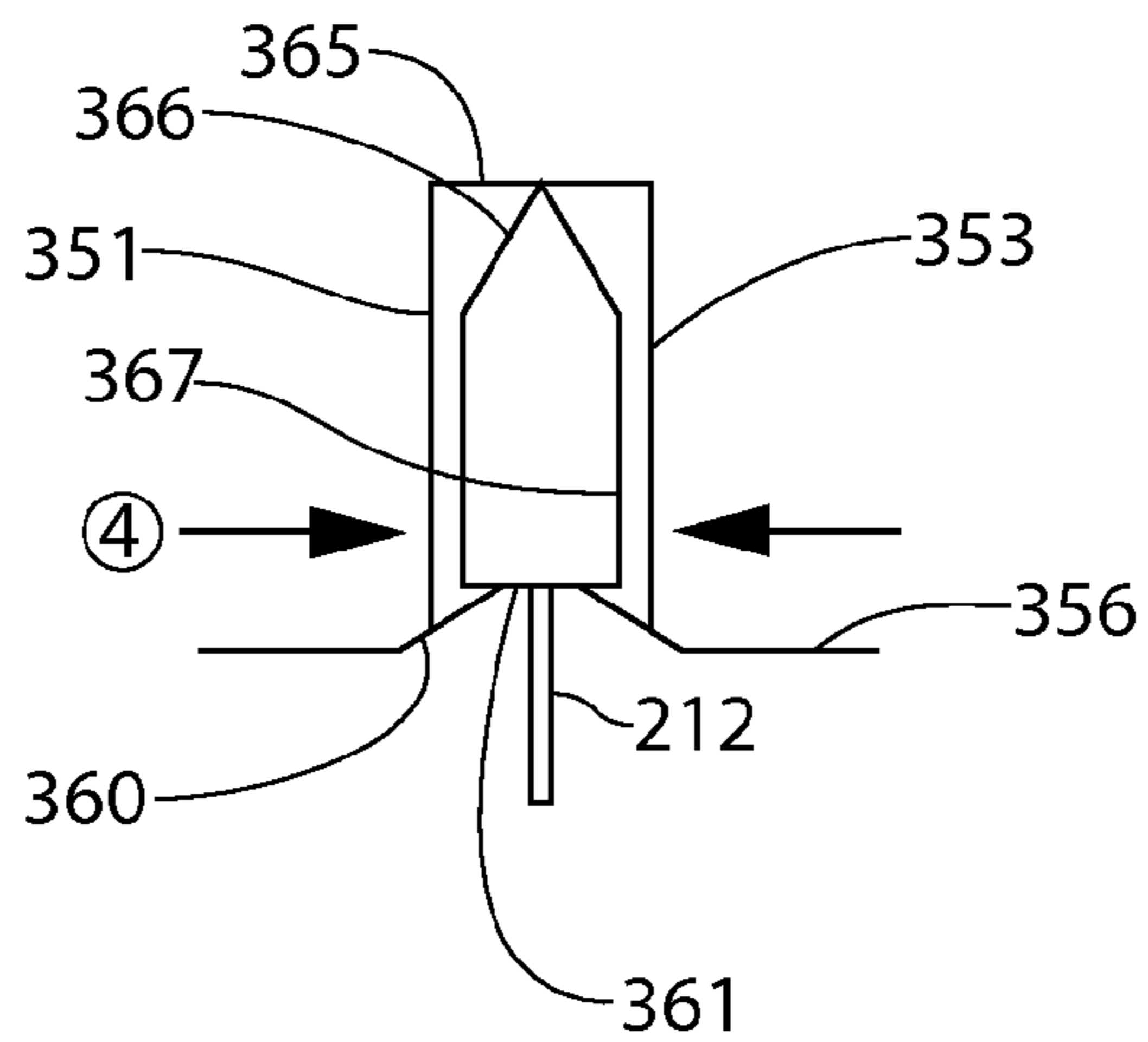


FIG. 7C



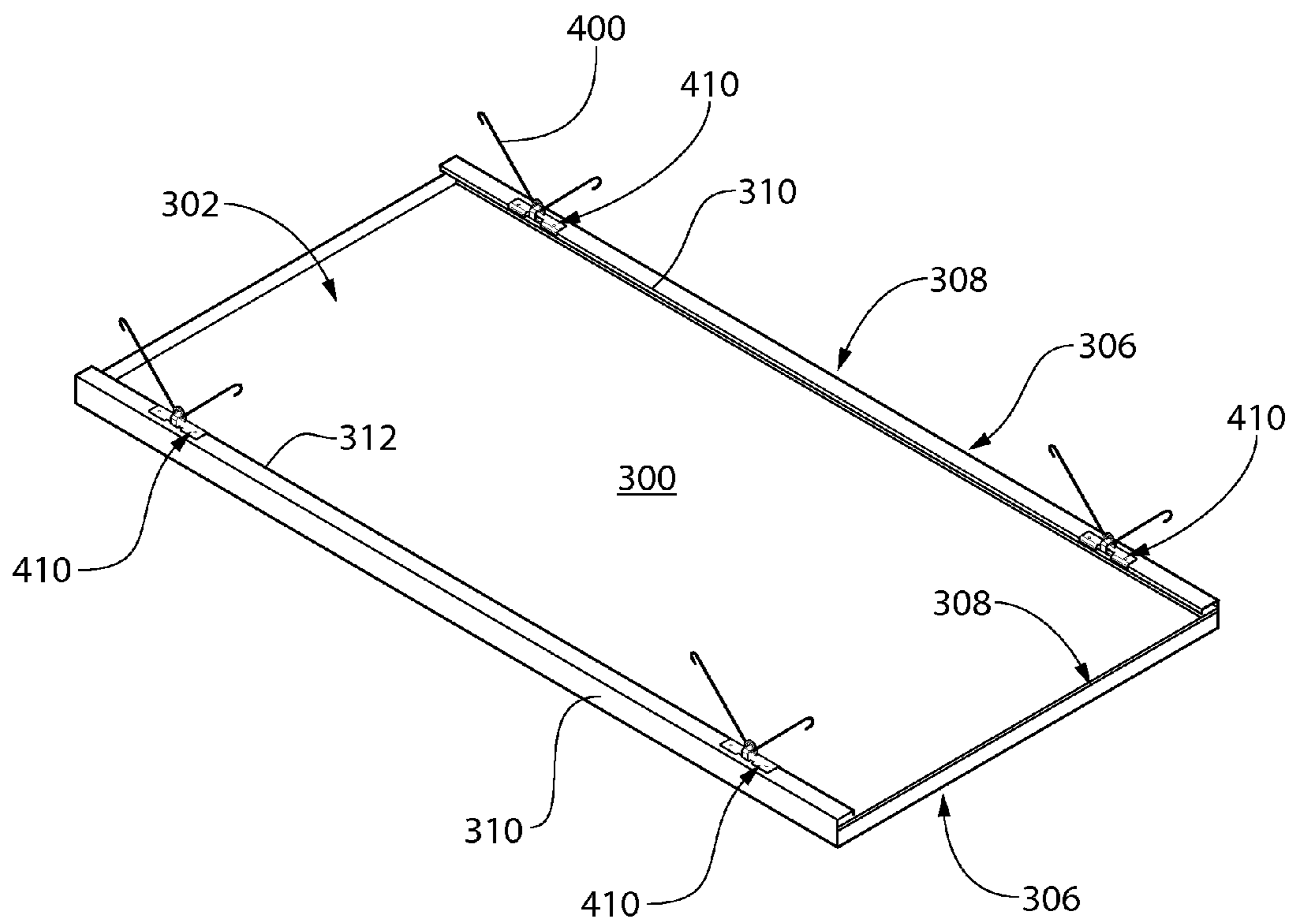


FIG. 8A

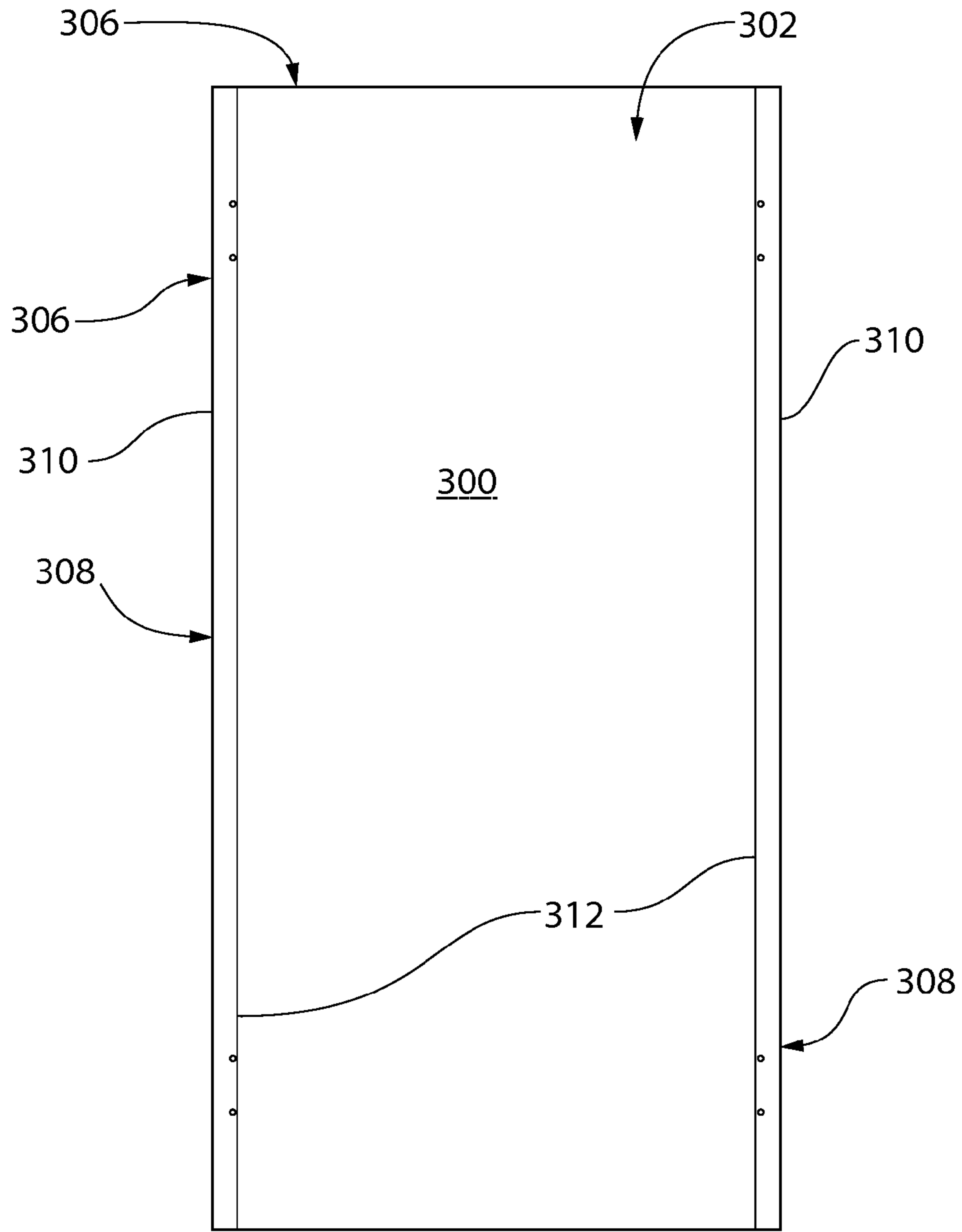


FIG. 8B

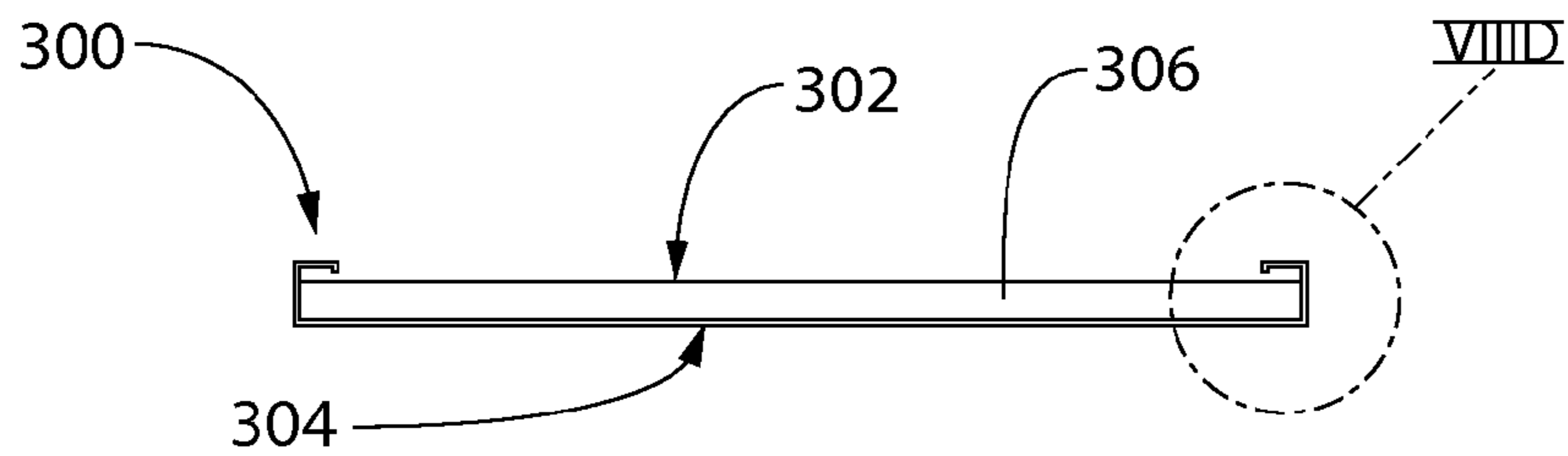


FIG. 8C

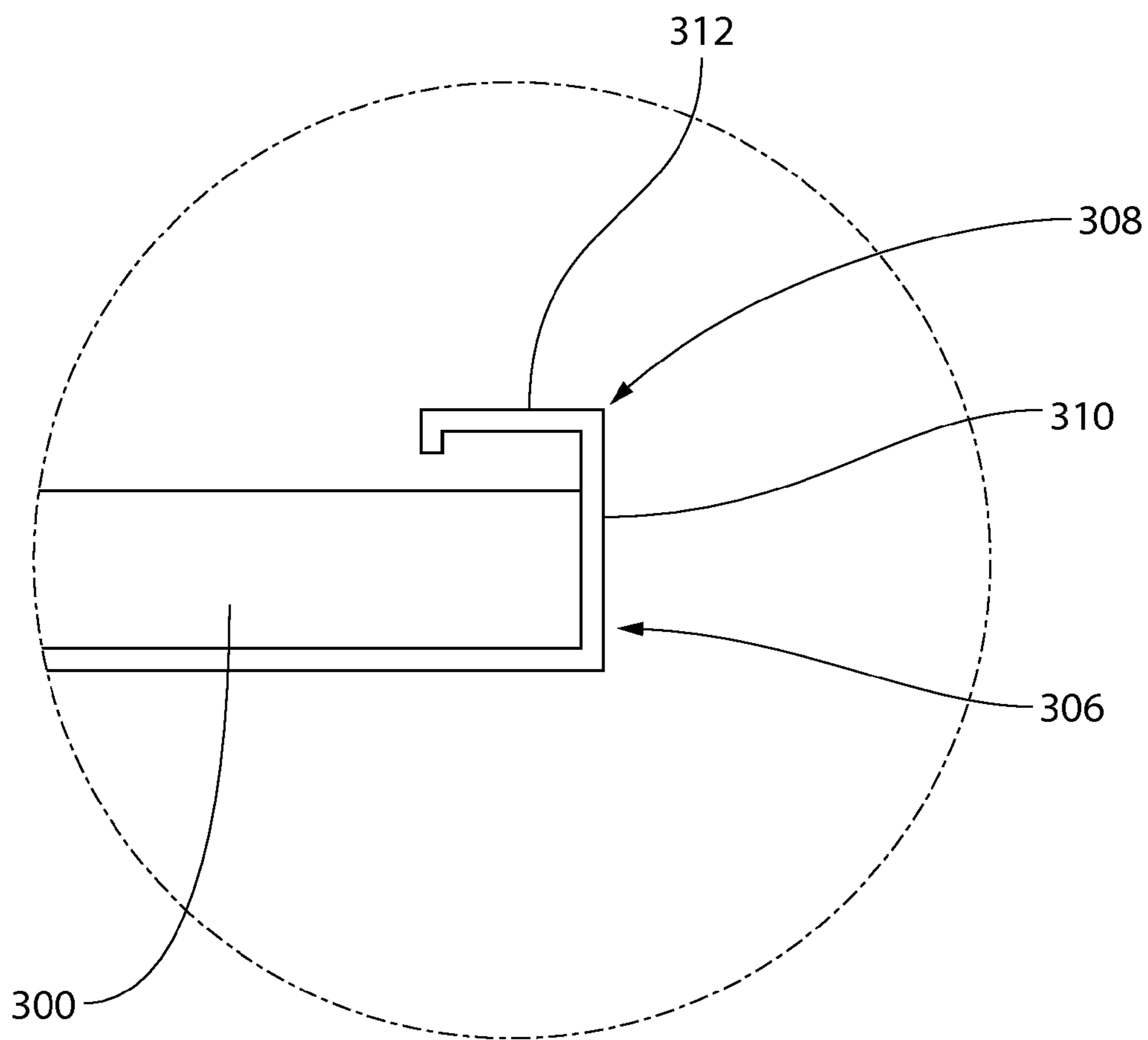


FIG. 8D

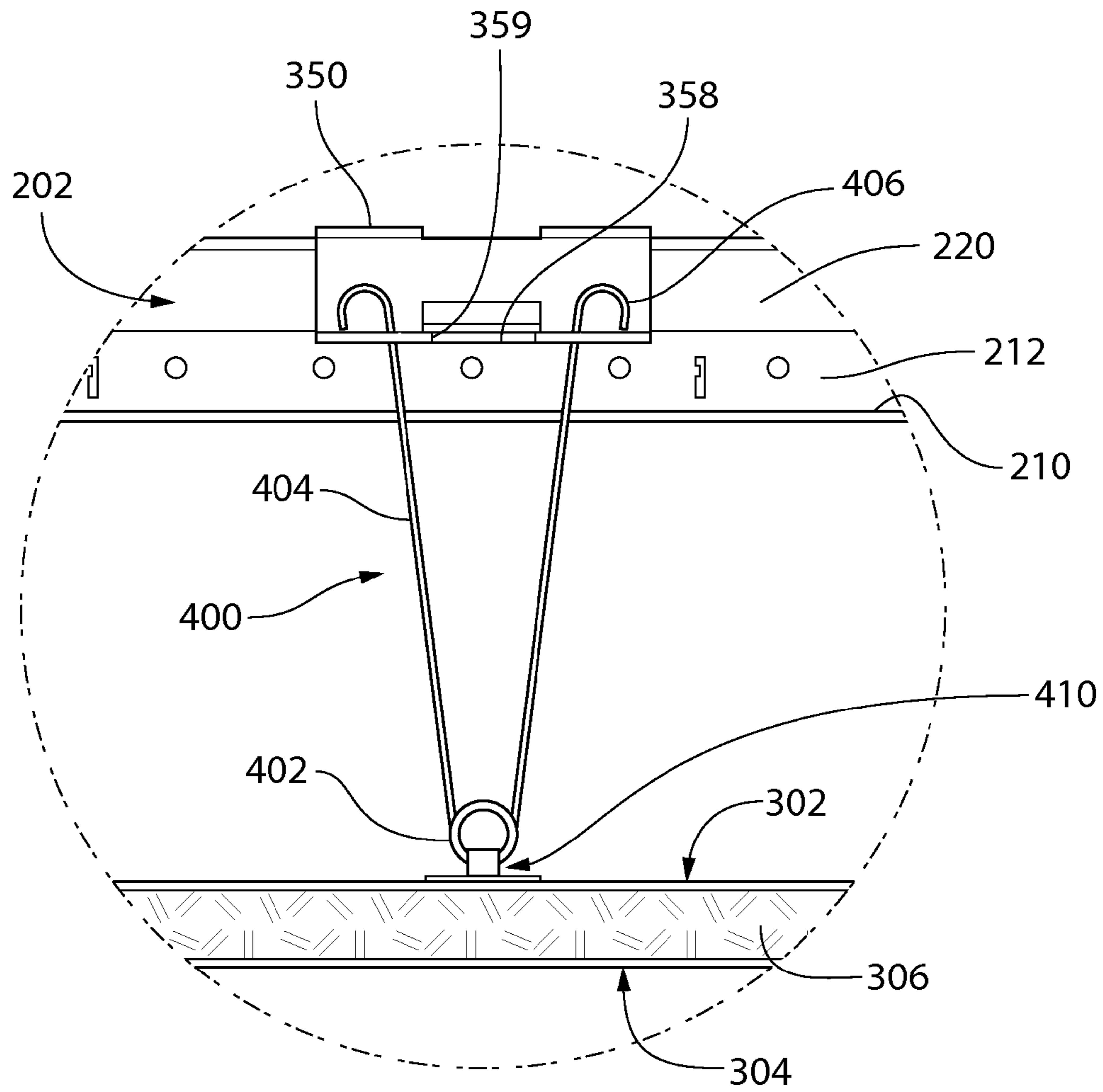


FIG. 9

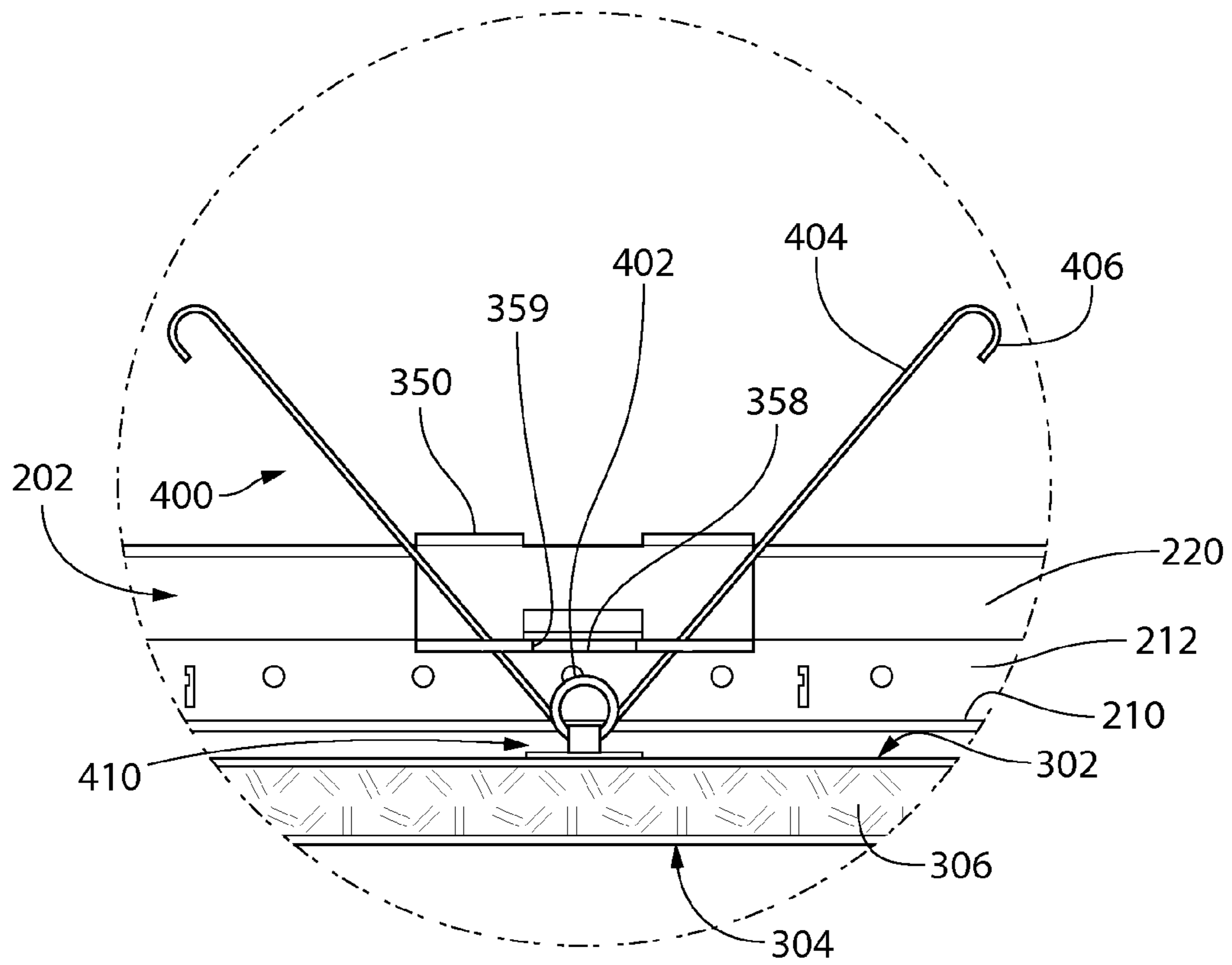


FIG. 10

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CEILING SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to suspended ceiling systems, and more particularly to a ceiling system with detachable ceiling panels.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Numerous types of suspended ceiling systems and methods for mounting ceiling panels have been used. One type of system includes a suspended support grid including an array of intersecting grid support members configured to hang a plurality of individual ceiling panels therefrom. An improved ceiling system is desired which can facilitate mounting individual panels to the grid and reduces installation costs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a ceiling system generally including grid support members, ceiling panels having torsion springs mounted thereto for hanging the panels, and spring clips configured to snap lock onto the grid support members for coupling the torsion springs and attached panels to the grid support members. The spring clips are axially slidable along the grid support members to a desired position for attaching the torsion springs to the clips. Because the spring clips are snap locked onto the grid support members to prevent the clips from falling off during ceiling installation, the need for fasteners for this purpose and concomitant non-adjustable fixed clip mounting positions are eliminated. Advantageously, this translates into less cumbersome ceiling panel installation and reduced installation costs.

In one embodiment, a ceiling system includes a longitudinally extending grid support member defining a longitudinal axis, the grid support member including a bottom flange, a top stiffening channel, and a vertical web connecting the stiffening channel to the bottom flange; a ceiling panel; a torsion spring mounted on the ceiling panel; and a spring clip slideably mounted on the grid support member and movable in opposing axial directions. The spring clip engages and retains the torsion spring. The spring clip includes a pair of resilient locking tabs engaging the grid support member on opposing sides of the vertical web. The locking tabs are configured to lock the spring clip to the grid support member, wherein the ceiling panel is supported from the grid support member by the torsion springs. In one embodiment, the locking tabs each project inwards to engage the grid support member.

In another embodiment, a ceiling system includes a longitudinally extending horizontal grid support member defining a longitudinal axis, the grid support member including a bottom flange, a bulbous top stiffening channel, and a vertical web connecting the stiffening channel to the bottom flange; a ceiling panel; a torsion spring mounted on the ceiling panel; and a resilient spring clip slideably mounted on the grid support member and movable in opposing axial directions. The spring clip includes a mounting portion configured for engaging the top stiffening channel, and a pair of laterally extending flanges at least one of which includes a slot configured to engage the torsion spring. A pair of resiliently movable locking tabs are disposed on the spring clip. The locking tabs are positioned beneath and proximate to a bottom surface of the top stiffening channel to lock the spring clip to the grid support member. The locking tabs are laterally deflectable in opposing directions when mounting the spring clip onto the grid support member.

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A method for mounting a spring clip on a ceiling grid support member is provided. In one embodiment, the method includes: providing a grid support member defining a longitudinal axis; providing a spring clip including a body defining a downwardly open receptacle, a pair of opposing lateral flanges, and a pair of locking tabs; inserting the grid support member into the receptacle; slideably engaging the locking tabs with a top surface of the grid support member; displacing the locking tabs outward in laterally opposing directions from an inward position to an outward position; returning the locking tabs to the inward position; and locking the spring clip to the grid support member with the locking tabs, wherein a snap-fit is created between the spring clip and grid support member. In one embodiment, the locking step includes engaging each locking tab with a bottom surface disposed on the grid support member.

In one embodiment, a spring clip for mounting ceiling panels equipped with torsion springs to a ceiling support grid includes a body including a mounting portion defining a downwardly open receptacle configured for attachment to a ceiling grid support member, a pair of lateral flanges extending outwards from the spring clip, at least one of the flanges including a slot configured to engage a torsion spring, and a pair of resiliently movable locking tabs disposed on the spring clip. The locking tabs are configured to engage opposing sides of the grid support member, wherein the locking tabs are laterally deflectable in opposing directions when attaching the spring clip onto the grid support member and lock the spring clip to the grid support member.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features of the exemplary embodiments of the present invention will be described with reference to the following drawings, where like elements are labeled similarly, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a top perspective view a ceiling system including an overhead suspended support grid and ceiling panels according to the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged view thereof;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged view from FIG. 2 showing a detail for coupling a torsion spring and ceiling panel to a grid support member of the support grid from FIG. 1;

FIG. 4A is transverse side cross sectional view taken along line IV-IV in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4B is an enlarged view from FIG. 4A;

FIG. 5 is a top perspective view of a spring clip from FIG. 1 for coupling the torsion spring to a grid support member;

FIG. 6 is a side elevation view thereof;

FIGS. 7A-C are schematic views showing sequential steps in mounting the spring clip of FIGS. 5 and 6 to a grid support member;

FIG. 8A is a top perspective view of a ceiling panel with torsion springs mounted thereto;

FIG. 8B is a top plan view thereof;

FIG. 8C is an end elevation view thereof;

FIG. 8D is an enlarged detail from FIG. 8C;

FIG. 9 is a side elevation view showing a ceiling panel with torsion spring in an open mounted position on the grid support member;

FIG. 10 is a side elevation view showing the ceiling panel with torsion spring in a closed mounted position on the grid support member.

All drawings are schematic and not necessarily to scale. Parts given a reference numerical designation in one figure may be considered to be the same parts where they appear in

other figures without a numerical designation for brevity unless specifically labeled with a different part number and described herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

The features and benefits of the invention are illustrated and described herein by reference to exemplary embodiments. This description of exemplary embodiments is intended to be read in connection with the accompanying drawings, which are to be considered part of the entire written description. Accordingly, the disclosure expressly should not be limited to such exemplary embodiments illustrating some possible non-limiting combination of features that may exist alone or in other combinations of features.

In the description of embodiments disclosed herein, any reference to direction or orientation is merely intended for convenience of description and is not intended in any way to limit the scope of the present invention. Relative terms such as “lower,” “upper,” “horizontal,” “vertical,” “above,” “below,” “up,” “down,” “top” and “bottom” as well as derivative thereof (e.g., “horizontally,” “downwardly,” “upwardly,” etc.) should be construed to refer to the orientation as then described or as shown in the drawing under discussion. These relative terms are for convenience of description only and do not require that the apparatus be constructed or operated in a particular orientation. Terms such as “attached,” “affixed,” “connected,” “coupled,” “interconnected,” and similar refer to a relationship wherein structures are secured or attached to one another either directly or indirectly through intervening structures, as well as both movable or rigid attachments or relationships, unless expressly described otherwise.

FIGS. 1-3 depict an exemplary embodiment of a ceiling system 100 according to the present disclosure. The ceiling system 100 includes an overhead support grid 200 mountable in a suspended manner from an overhead building support structure. Support grid 200 includes a plurality intersecting longitudinal grid support members 202 and lateral grid support members 204. Longitudinal and lateral grid support members 202, 204 are elongated in shape having a length greater than their respective width (e.g. at least twice), and in various embodiments lengths substantially greater than their widths (e.g. 3 times or more). Longitudinal grid support member 202 may have a substantially greater length than lateral grid support member 204 and form “runners” or “rails” which are maintained in a substantially parallel spaced apart relationship by the lateral grid support members. The lateral grid support members 204 may be attached between adjacent (but spaced apart) longitudinal grid support members 202 at appropriate intervals using any suitable permanent or detachable manner employed in the art. The combination of interconnected longitudinal and lateral grid support members 202, 204 provides lateral stability to the support grid 200.

In one embodiment, grid support members 202 and 204 may be horizontally oriented when installed. It will be appreciated, however, that other suitable mounted orientations of support members 202, 204 such as angled or slanted (i.e. between 0 and 90 degrees to horizontal). Accordingly, although support members 202, 204 may be described in one exemplary orientation herein as horizontal, the invention is not limited to this orientation alone and other orientations may be used.

Longitudinal and lateral grid support members 202, 204 intersect to form an array of grid openings 208 which become essentially closed by ceiling panels 300 positioned below or within the openings. In some embodiments, the grid support

members 202, 204 may be arranged in an orthogonal pattern wherein the support members intersect at right angles to form rectilinear grid openings 208 such as squares or rectangles (in top plan view). The terminal ends of the lateral grid support members 204 may be configured to interlock with the transversely oriented longitudinal grid support members 202 at right angles to form the rectilinear grid pattern in any manner used in the art. Any suitable interlocking mechanism and configuration may be used, including for example without limitation interlocking tabs and slots, brackets, clips, etc. Accordingly, the present invention is not limited by the manner of attachment used.

With additional reference to FIG. 4A-B, longitudinal and lateral grid support members 202, 204 may be T-shaped (e.g. T-rails) in transverse cross section. The grid support members have an inverted T-shaped configuration when in an installed position suspended from an overhead building ceiling support structure. The support members 202, 204 may be suspended from the building ceiling support structure via a hanger mechanism 203, such as for example without limitation fasteners, hangers, wires, cables, rods, struts, etc.

Referring to FIGS. 1-4, grid support members 202, 204 include a longitudinally-extending horizontal bottom flange 210, a bulbous top stiffening channel 220, and a vertical web 212 extending upwards from the flange to the stiffening channel. The longitudinal grid support members 202 each define a respective longitudinal axis LA and axial directions. Web 212 may be centered between opposing longitudinally extending edges 214 of flange 210 in one embodiment. Bottom flange 210 has opposing portions which extend laterally outwards from web 212 and terminate in opposed longitudinally extending edges 214. In one embodiment, edges 214 may have a slightly enlarged bulbous configuration in transverse cross-section. Bottom flange 210 further defines a bottom surface 206 facing downwards away from the flange and towards a room or space below the support grid 200. Bottom surface 206 defines a horizontal reference plane for the overhead support grid 200. When mounted to the ceiling support grid 200, the upward facing top surfaces of the ceiling panel 300 may be positioned proximate to or contact the bottom surfaces 206 of the grid support members 202, 204.

Grid support members 202, 204 may be made of any suitable metallic or non-metallic materials structured to support the dead weight or load of ceiling panels 300 without undue deflection. In some preferred but non-limiting embodiments, the grid support members may be made of metal including aluminum, titanium, steel, or other. In one embodiment, the grid support members 202, 204 may be a standard heavy duty $1\frac{5}{16}$ inch aluminum T-rail.

Referring to FIGS. 1-8, ceiling panel 300 may have a generally flattened body with a substantially greater horizontal width and length than vertical thickness as shown. Ceiling panel 300 includes a top surface 302, bottom surface 304, and lateral sides 306 extending therebetween along four sides of the panel. Top and bottom surfaces 302, 304 may be generally planar and arranged parallel to each other in one embodiment. In one non-limiting embodiment, the lateral sides 306 may be planar forming opposing pairs of parallel lateral sides.

It will be appreciated that the top and bottom surfaces 302, 304 of ceiling panels 300 may have other configurations or surface profiles rather than planar. In other possible configurations, the front and rear surfaces 302, 304 may have irregular surfaces including various undulating patterns, designs, textures, perforations, ridges/valleys, wavy raised features, or other configurations for aesthetic and/or acoustic (e.g. sound reflection or dampening) purposes. Accordingly, top and bottom surfaces 302, 304 are not limited to any particular surface

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profile or configuration. The invention is therefore not limited to any of the particular foregoing constructions.

Ceiling panels **300** may be constructed of any suitable material including without limitation mineral fiber board, fiberglass, jute fiber, metals, polymers, wood, or other. In addition, the ceiling panels **300** may have any suitable dimensions and shapes (in top plan view) including without limitation square or rectangular.

Referring to FIGS. **1-8**, the ceiling panels **300** may be mounted to the support grid **200** using torsion springs **400** and snap-on slidable slotted spring clips **350** which are movably mounted on support grid **200**. The torsion springs **400** each include a coil **402** and two upwardly projecting arms **404** which are disposed at angle in relation to each other forming a characteristic V-shape. Torsion springs **400** are commercially available. Arms **404** may be arranged tangentially to the circular coil **402** which defines a mounting axis SA. The arms **404** may have recurved or hooked ends **406** configured to engage the spring clips **350**, as further described herein. Torsion springs **400** may be formed of a suitable spring material, such as without limitation steel wire having an elastic memory.

Ceiling panels **300** include spring-mounting brackets **410** configured to capture the coil **402** of torsions springs **400** for attaching the springs to the panels. Brackets **410** may have any suitable configuration that may be coupled to the ceiling panel **300** along the perimeter edges **308** of the panels (see, e.g. FIGS. **1-4** and **8**). In one embodiment, the opposed longitudinally extending lateral sides **306** may include metallic mounting angles **310** for attaching the brackets **410** to the ceiling panel **300** such as via fasteners, adhesives, welding/soldering, or other suitable attachment methods. In one configuration, the angles **310** may each include a longitudinally extending horizontal lip **312**, which may project inwards from the lateral sides **306** of the ceiling panel **300**. The lip **312** defines a convenient flat horizontal surface for mounting the brackets **410**.

Referring to FIGS. **3-6**, spring clips **350** have a body configured for mounting on longitudinal grid support members **202**. In one embodiment, spring clips **350** include an inverted U-shaped central mounting portion **352** configured to engage the bulbous top stiffening channel **220** of longitudinal grid support member **202** and a lateral spring-mounting portion **354**. Mounting portion **352** may be comprised of a horizontal top wall **365** and pair of opposing and laterally spaced apart vertical sidewalls **351** and **353** forming a downwardly open receptacle **355** for receiving stiffening channel **220** of the grid support member **202**. Spring-mounting portion **354** may be comprised of a pair of horizontally projecting lateral flanges **356** configured to engage arms **404** of torsion spring **400**. Flanges **356** are arranged on opposing sides of mounting portion **352** and protrude outwards in opposing lateral (horizontal) directions. Spring clip **350** has a shorter axial length as shown than grid support members **202** and/or **204**.

Flanges **356** each include a laterally open and elongated slot **358** which receives arms **404** of torsion spring **400** therein. Slots **358** extend in the longitudinal direction parallel to longitudinal axis LA of grid support members **202**. A lateral opening **359** in each flange **356** communicates with the slots **358** to facilitate insertion of the spring arms **404** into the slots. Lateral opening **359** has a shorter longitudinal width (measured along the longitudinal axis LA) than the longitudinal length (measured along the longitudinal axis LA) of the slots **358** in one embodiment. The slots **358** define opposing ends **357** configured to engage and retain arms **404** of torsions spring **400**, as further described herein.

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Advantageously, spring clips **350** are configured to slide in opposing axial directions along the grid support members **202** when mounted thereon. This permits the clip to be located and maintained in a continuum of possible mounting positions along support members **202**. Accordingly, an installer need not pre-measure and pre-mount the spring clips **350** in a precise location on grid support members **202** to coincide with the fixed mounting positions of the torsion springs **400** usually already pre-mounted on ceiling panel **300** to prevent the clips from falling off during ceiling installation. Instead, the spring clips **350** may easily be adjusted in axial position to match the fixed torsion spring locations while mounting the ceiling panel **300** to grid support member **202**. Pre-measuring and precise layout of the spring clips **350** on the grid support members **202** in advance are therefore obviated. Overall, this makes hanging the ceiling panels **300** more convenient and less time consuming, thereby advantageously reducing installation costs.

Referring to FIGS. **3-6**, spring clip **350** further includes at least one opposing pair of resiliently movable locking tabs **360**. In one embodiment, locking tabs **360** may be centrally located on spring clip **350** at the midpoint between the axial ends of the clip as shown. Other locations of locking tabs **360** are possible. The locking tabs **360** are configured to engage grid support member **202** for locking the clip **350** in one of the plurality of possible mounting positions on the grid support member. In one embodiment, the locking tabs **360** may each be disposed on the flanges **356**. The tabs **360** define an upward facing bearing surface **362**, a portion of which may engage the downward facing bottom surface **361** and/or adjacent longitudinally extending bottom edge **363** of the bulbous top stiffening channel **220** on grid support members **202**.

Locking tabs **360** project horizontally inwards from each lateral flange **356** into the receptacle **355** and are disposed at an angle A1 to the flanges in one embodiment. This forms longitudinally extending upturned edges **364** on each locking tab **360** that engage the bottom surface **361** and bottom edge **363** on the grid support member bulbous top stiffening channel **220**. This locks the spring clip **350** onto grid support member **202** to prevent vertical or transverse detachment of spring clip from the support member. In non-limiting exemplary embodiments, angle A1 may be between 0 and 45 degrees. The angled orientation of the locking tabs further facilitates smooth engagement with the top slanted surfaces **366** of the top stiffening channel **220** of grid support member **202** and initiation of lateral deflection of the tabs when the spring clip **350** is mounted on the support member, as further described herein.

The locking tabs **360** are spaced laterally apart by a distance D1 small enough to engage the opposing sidewalls **367** of the bulbous top stiffening channel **220** and displace or deflect the tabs laterally outwards when the channel is inserted into the spring clip receptacle **355**, as best shown in FIGS. **7A-C** and further described herein. To accomplish this, the edges **364** of locking tabs **360** project inwards beyond sidewalls **351**, **353**. Accordingly, the locking tabs **360** are separated from each other by a lateral distance D1 which is smaller than the lateral distance D2 measured between the interior surfaces of sidewalls **351**, **353** of spring clip **350**. Distance D2 is slightly larger than the exterior lateral width W1 of the top stiffening channel **220** of grid support members **202** for insertion of the stiffening channel therein as shown. Conversely, distance D1 is smaller than Width W1 to enable the lateral deflection of the locking tabs **360**.

In one embodiment, the locking tabs **360** may be configured to snap into a position beneath and proximate to the bottom surface **361** of the top stiffening channel **220** on grid

support member 202. The locking tabs 360 are each positioned vertically below and trapped beneath the bottom surface 361 such that the spring clip 350 cannot be vertically or transversely withdrawn from the grid support member 202 after installation of the clip. In such an arrangement, the spring clip 350 is freely slidable in opposing axial directions on the grid support member.

In another embodiment, the locking tabs 360 may be configured to frictionally engage the grid support member 202 (i.e. bottom surface 361 of bulbous top stiffening channel 220) creating a slight compressive force between the locking tabs and grid support member. This arrangement assists with retaining the locking tabs 361 in a desired axial mounting position on longitudinal grid support members 202 during the ceiling installation process. The locking tabs 360 are preferably configured, however, to not create a frictional force so great as to preclude the spring clip 350 from moving slideably in axial position along the grid support members 202. The locking tabs 360 therefore create a snug, but slidable fit and attachment between the spring clips 400 and the grid support members 202 capable of maintaining the axial position of the spring clips during installation of the ceiling panels 300.

The entire spring clip 350 may be made of an elastically deformable resilient material to facilitate installing the clip on the grid support members 202. In non-limiting exemplary embodiments, the spring clip may be made of metal such as without limitation galvanized steel, cold rolled steel, spring steel, stainless steel, aluminum, etc. or non-metal such as a suitable polymer with sufficient strength and flexibility. The U-shaped geometry of the spring clip 350 when constructed of such a resilient material allows the opposing flanges 356 of the clip to spread apart horizontally and laterally outwards when the bulbous top stiffening channel 220 is inserted vertically upwards into the receptacle 355 of the grid support member 202. Angled or slanted opposing top surfaces 366 on the top of the top stiffening channel 220 engage the locking tabs 360 to spread the sidewalls 351, 353 and flanges 356 apart, as further described in mounting method disclosed herein.

In one embodiment, the spring clip 350 may have a unitary structure being formed of a single piece of material which may be bent, molded, or otherwise formed to produce the foregoing features of the clip. Accordingly, the flanges 356, locking tabs 360, sidewalls 351, 353, and top wall 365 may be integrally formed as part of the unitary spring clip structure. In other possible embodiments, one or more of these features may be formed as separate elements and assembled in the spring clip 350 by any suitable method used in the art (e.g. welding, soldering, fasteners, etc.). The invention is therefore not limited in the type of construction used to form spring clip 350.

In other embodiments contemplated, the locking tabs 360 need not be arranged in laterally opposing in relationship to each other. Accordingly each locking tab 360 may be axially offset or staggered in position from the other locking tab on flanges 356 in some embodiments. In addition, more than two locking tabs 360 may be provided including even and odd numbers of locking tabs. For example, in one possible alternative embodiment, a single centrally located locking tab 360 may be provided on one flange 356 and two axially spaced apart locking tabs may be provided on the other flange on opposite sides of the single tab. Numerous arrangements of locking tabs 360 are therefore possible. Locking tabs 360 have an axial length less than the axial length of the spring clip 350 in one embodiment, as shown (see, e.g. FIG. 5). The axial length of each locking tab 360 may also be varied or different.

An exemplary method for installing spring clips 350 on longitudinal grid support members 202 will now be described. Reference is made to FIGS. 4A-B and FIGS. 7A-C schematically showing sequential steps in the spring clip mounting process. The numbered directional arrows in FIGS. 7A-C show the relative movement and deformation of the spring clip 350 during the mounting process.

A spring clip 350 is provided and positioned above the top of grid support member 202. The receptacle 355 of the spring clip 350 is vertically aligned with the bulbous top stiffening channel 220 of grid support member 202 along the vertical centerline Cv defined by the support member. The spring clip 350 is then lowered into engagement with (if not already) the grid support member wherein top stiffening channel 220 partially enters a lower portion of the receptacle 355, as shown in FIG. 7A. The opposed upturned edges 364 of the mounting clip locking tabs 360 initially make abutting contact with the two opposed slanted top surfaces 366 on the stiffening channel 220. It should be noted that the sidewalls 351, 353 and locking tabs 360 of the spring clip 350 are still in their initial undeflected position and oriented substantially parallel to each other (FIG. 7A).

The clip 350 is then pressed downward against the stiffening channel 220 of grid support member 202 with sufficient force to cause the locking tabs 360 and flanges 356 of spring clip 350 to be progressively deflected and displaced laterally outwards in opposing directions (see arrows) as the edges 364 of locking tabs slide farther downward and outward respectively along the slanted top surfaces 366 of the stiffening channel. The locking tabs are deflected and displaced from an inward position to an outward position. Distance D1 between the locking tabs 360 concomitantly increases from the undeflected position of the tabs shown in FIG. 6.

Eventually, in the continued downward movement of spring clip 350, the locking tabs 360 will leave the top slanted surfaces 366 and slideably engage the vertical sidewalls 367 of bulbous top stiffening channel 220, thereby reaching a maximum lateral deflection position (i.e. outward position) as shown in FIG. 7B. The sidewalls 351, 353, of spring clip 350 are also in a maximum non-parallel orientation in relation to each other being disposed at an angle A2 with respect to a vertical reference line Vr coinciding with the original undeflected position of the sidewalls. Angle A2 is greater than 0 degrees and less than 45 degrees in one embodiment, and in some instances may be very small between 0 and 15 degrees. The resilient construction of the spring clip 350 allows the sidewalls 351, 353 to deform in relation to the top wall 365.

The locking tabs 360 continue to slide downward while maintaining contact with sidewalls 367 until they eventually reach a vertical position below the sidewalls 367 of the bulbous top stiffening channel 220 on the grid support member 202. The elastic memory of the spring clip 350 now causes the sidewalls 351, 353 and locking tabs 360 to snap back and move inwards to their original undeflected inward position as shown in FIG. 7C. The upturned edges 364 on each locking tab 360 and adjacent portion of bearing surfaces 362 may engage the bottom surface 361 on the top stiffening channel 220 forming a frictional snap-fit that prevents vertical or transverse withdrawal of the spring clip 350 from the grid support member 202. In some embodiments, the locking tabs 360 may vertically fall and be spaced slightly below the bottom surface 361 of stiffening channel 220 rather than in direct frictional contact, but nonetheless are still snap-fit into position onto grid support member 202 and similarly cannot be withdrawn. This latter arrangement allows the spring clips 350 to freely slide in axial position along grid support member 202 with minimal resistance. In either of the foregoing

arrangements, the locking tabs are trapped below the stiffening channel to prevent withdrawal of the spring clip 350 from the grid support member 202.

The top stiffening channel 220 of the grid support member 202 is fully inserted into the upper and lower portions of the spring clip receptacle 355. The spring clip 350 is now fully mounted on grid support member 202 (see, e.g. FIGS. 4A-B). Advantageously, the locking tabs 360 allow mounting the spring clip 350 to grid support member 202 without the use of fasteners and cannot fall off the support member when a ceiling panel 300 and torsion spring 400 are mounted thereto. Accordingly, the spring clip 350 may now be slid axially in the fully mounted position to the desired axial position on the grid support member 202 (see bi-directional arrow in FIG. 2) for mounting the ceiling panel 300 using the torsion springs 400.

It will be appreciated that numerous variations in the foregoing ceiling panel installation process and sequence are possible. In addition, it is possible to vertically or transversely detach or withdraw the spring clips 350 from grid support member 202 by forcing or prying the flanges 356 and locking tabs 360 laterally apart with a tool, and then sliding the spring clip upwards back off the support member. This will disengage the locking tabs 360 from underneath the bottom surface 361 of the top stiffening channel 220 to unlock the spring clips 350.

In some embodiments, it will be appreciated that spring clips 400 may also be mounted on the lateral grid support members 204 in the same manner described above either in addition to or instead of the longitudinal grid support members 202 to support the ceiling panels 300.

Multiple spring clips 350 may be provided to satisfactorily support a single ceiling panel 300 from the overhead support grid 200. In one non-limiting embodiment, four spring clips 350 may be provided as shown in FIGS. 1 and 8A. Larger ceiling panels may require additional spring clips for proper support.

After the spring clips 350 have been installed on the support grid 200, the ceiling panels 300 with pre-installed torsion springs 400 (see, e.g. FIG. 8A) may be hung. If the spring clips 350 do not align vertically with the torsions springs 400, the spring clips may be slid along the grid support member 200 to adjust the alignment.

Referring now to FIG. 9, the arms 404 of the torsion spring 400 are squeezed and compressed together towards each other and inserted into slot 358 in the spring clip 350. In one embodiment, the arms 404 may be inserted laterally into the slot through lateral opening 359 while continuing to squeeze the arms 404 together. In one embodiment, the recurved ends 406 and upper portions of the spring arms 404 may be positioned initially within the slot because these ends are most flexible and easy to squeeze together. Next, the arms 404 may then be released once they are positioned within the slot 358. The upper portion of spring arms 404 engages the ends 357 of slot 358. Releasing the ceiling panel 300 engages the downward extending recurved ends 406 of arms 404 with the top surface of the flange 356 on spring clip 350 as shown. The ceiling panel 300 is now vertically spaced apart from and below the bottom of the grid support member 202 in this position by a first distance. This supports that portion of the ceiling panel 300 while the remaining springs 400 are inserted into their respective spring clips 350 on grid support members 202 in a similar manner. The position of ceiling panel 300 shown in FIG. 9 may be considered an open hung position with the ceiling panel being suspended from the grid support members 202 by the torsion springs 400.

To complete installation of the ceiling panel 300, the panel is raised vertically towards the grid support members 202. The torsion springs 400 are pushed upwards further through the slot 358, thereby allowing the spring arms 404 to spread farther apart. In one embodiment, ceiling panel is raised until top surface 302 abuts the bottom surface 206 of the grid support member 202 as shown in FIGS. 4A-B and 10. The lower portions of the spring arms 404 now engage the ends 357 of the spring clip slot 358. The outward biasing spring force k which acts to spread the spring arms 404 apart is preferably selected to retain and support the weight of ceiling panel 300 in this fully mounted position. The position of ceiling panel 300 shown in FIG. 10 may be considered a closed hung position with the ceiling panel being suspended from the grid support members 202 by the torsion springs 400.

While the foregoing description and drawings represent exemplary embodiments of the present disclosure, it will be understood that various additions, modifications and substitutions may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope and range of equivalents of the accompanying claims. In particular, it will be clear to those skilled in the art that the present invention may be embodied in other forms, structures, arrangements, proportions, sizes, and with other elements, materials, and components, without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. In addition, numerous variations in the methods/processes described herein may be made within the scope of the present disclosure. One skilled in the art will further appreciate that the embodiments may be used with many modifications of structure, arrangement, proportions, sizes, materials, and components and otherwise, used in the practice of the disclosure, which are particularly adapted to specific environments and operative requirements without departing from the principles described herein. The presently disclosed embodiments are therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive. The appended claims should be construed broadly, to include other variants and embodiments of the disclosure, which may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and range of equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A ceiling system comprising:

a longitudinally extending grid support member defining a longitudinal axis, the grid support member including a bottom flange, a top stiffening channel, and a vertical web connecting the stiffening channel to the bottom flange;

a ceiling panel;

a torsion spring mounted on the ceiling panel;

a spring clip slideably mounted on the grid support member and movable in opposing axial directions, the spring clip comprising a mounting portion, a pair of lateral flanges extending laterally outwards in opposing directions from the mounting portion, and a pair of resilient locking tabs, the pair of lateral flanges engaging and retaining the torsion spring;

the pair of resilient locking tabs engaging the grid support member on opposing sides of the vertical web, each of the locking tabs located below a bottom surface of the top stiffening channel and configured to engage the bottom surface of the top stiffening channel to vertically lock the spring clip to the grid support member;

wherein the locking tabs are symmetrically centrally arranged on the clip and spaced inwards from opposing ends of the clip such that each tab is diametrically opposite the other tab;

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wherein the locking tabs are formed as an integral bent portion of each lateral flange; and wherein the ceiling panel is supported from the grid support member by the torsion springs.

2. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the locking tabs each project inwards to engage the grid support member.

3. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the spring clip includes an elongated slot that engages the torsion spring.

4. The ceiling system of claim 3, wherein the torsion spring includes a coil and two resilient arms.

5. The ceiling system of claim 4, wherein the arms of the torsion spring are engaged with the slot of the spring clip to retain the torsion spring.

6. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the spring clip is formed of an elastically deformable resilient material, the locking tabs being laterally deflectable when mounting the spring clip on the grid support member.

7. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the locking tabs are disposed at an angle with respect to the flanges.

8. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the spring clip is snap-fit onto the grid support member.

9. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the grid support member has a T-shaped cross-section.

10. The ceiling system of claim 1, wherein the locking tabs are separated by a lateral distance less than a lateral width of the top stiffening channel.

11. A spring clip for mounting ceiling panels equipped with torsion springs to a ceiling support grid, the clip comprising:

a body including a mounting portion defining a downwardly open receptacle configured for attachment to a ceiling grid support member;

a pair of lateral flanges extending outwards from the mounting portion, at least one of the flanges including a slot configured to engage a torsion spring;

a pair of resilient locking tabs disposed on the spring clip, the locking tabs configured to engage opposing sides of the grid support member, the locking tabs connected to and extending from an edge of a respective one of the lateral flanges;

wherein the locking tabs are symmetrically centrally arranged on the clip and spaced inwards from opposing ends of the clip such that each tab is diametrically opposite the other tab;

wherein the locking tabs are formed as an integral bent portion of each lateral flange;

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wherein the locking tabs are laterally deflectable in opposing directions when attaching the spring clip onto the grid support member and lock the spring clip to the grid support member; and

wherein the mounting portion comprises spaced-apart vertical sidewalls, each of the spaced-apart vertical sidewalls comprising an aperture located adjacent to and above a respective one of the locking tabs.

12. The spring clip of claim 11, wherein the spring clip is slidable when locked onto the grid support member.

13. The spring clip of claim 11, wherein the locking tabs are trapped beneath a bottom surface of the grid support member to lock the spring clip to the grid support member.

14. A ceiling system comprising:

a longitudinally extending grid support member defining a longitudinal axis, the grid support member including a bottom flange, a top stiffening channel, and a vertical web connecting the stiffening channel to the bottom flange;

a ceiling panel;

a torsion spring mounted on the ceiling panel;

a spring clip slideably mounted on the grid support member and movable in opposing axial directions, the spring clip comprising a mounting portion, a pair of lateral flanges extending laterally outwards in opposing directions from the mounting portion, and a pair of resilient locking tabs, the pair of lateral flanges engaging and retaining the torsion spring, each of the locking tabs located below a bottom surface of the top stiffening channel and configured to engage the bottom surface of the top stiffening channel to vertically lock the spring clip to the grid support member; and

wherein the ceiling panel is supported from the grid support member by the torsion springs; wherein the mounting portion comprises spaced-apart vertical sidewalls, each of the spaced-apart vertical sidewalls comprising an aperture located adjacent to and above a respective one of the resilient locking tabs.

15. The ceiling system of claim 14, wherein the resilient locking tabs are connected to and extend from an edge of a respective one of the lateral flanges.

16. The ceiling system of claim 14, wherein the spring clip is formed of an elastically deformable resilient material, the locking tabs being laterally deflectable when mounting the spring clip on the grid support member.

17. The ceiling system of claim 14, wherein the locking tabs are disposed at an angle with respect to the flanges.

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